

Make Me Strong by orphan_account

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Summary:

On Valentine's Day, Will goes to visit Mike in Chicago.

Make Me Strong

February 13th, 1990

“Hello?”

“Hi, is Mike there?” Will frowned as he twiddled the phone cord around his thumb.

“Who’s asking?”

“Will, Will Byers.”

“Oh, sure! I’m his roommate, Elliot. No, he just popped out, I’m afraid. You want to leave a message?”

“Um, can you tell him I’ll be there in about an hour? I’m at a gas station at the Illinois border.” Will heard a click. “Damn, I’m out of quarters. See you soon.” He heard a brief goodbye, truncated by the dial tone. God, he hated travelling. His stomach rumbled, and only then did he realise that he’d forgotten to eat since breakfast, and it was nearly seven o’clock. *At least I’ve had coffee*, he thought as he paid for a bag of chips and a bottle of coca-cola. Hardly the most healthy of meals, but hell, he was a student.

An hour later, he was parking outside a large apartment building in Chicago. “Apartment 46,” he muttered to himself as he scanned the buzzer panel. He jammed his finger onto the button and a voice he recognised answered.

“Hello?”

“Hi, it’s Will.” *Come on Byers, get a grip*, he thought as he felt his heartrate increased.

“Awesome, come on up!” Will found a note on the elevator – *OUT OF ORDER*.

"Course," Will muttered wryly. "Mike could've told me." He sighed and started hauling his suitcase up the stairs. It took him nearly ten minutes, but eventually he was standing, breathing hard, outside a door which, Will noticed, was noticeably newer than the rest of the décor. It had no number, but this had to be Mike's, Will realised, as he had mentioned a few months ago that the door had been replaced. He knocked and before he'd had a chance to step back, he was staring up into the face of Mike Wheeler for the first time in two months. "Mike," he breathed, but was drowned out by Mike's excited cry.

"Will!" Mike threw his arms around Will, who promptly dropped his suitcase as he was lifted off his feet and spun around. Will teetered as he landed, but he wasn't cross.

"Happy Valentine's Day," he said shyly.

"It's not until tomorrow, you dork," Mike laughed, punching him lightly on the arm.

"Happy Valentine's Eve then," Will grinned. Mike rolled his eyes and brought his boyfriend's suitcase into the apartment and tossed it on the sofa.

"Hey, Will?"

"Mm?" Will turned around, still taking off his coat when Mike held both his hands and kissed him. As they broke apart Will let out a deep sigh. "God, I've missed you."

"Me too," Mike murmured. "Want to grab a bite to eat?"

"Sure, will there be anywhere open?"

"It won't be five-star, but there'll be something."

"Honestly, I don't care," Will said, rebuttoning his coat. "I'm hungry and I'm with you, I'd eat out of a trash can."

"Oh, well, if those are your only requirements..." Mike smirked and lifted the lid of the kitchen garbage. Will wrinkled his nose.

“Okay, I notice you cleaned – congratulations – but you couldn’t have taken the trash out? That’s gross.”

“Fair point, my bad,” Mike admitted, closing it again. “Come on, my treat.”

“Okay,” started Will, taking Mike’s hand and swinging it as they walked along. Mike grinned down at his impossibly adorable boyfriend. “So I had this idea.”

“I’m terrified,” Mike said drily.

“I know you hate romantic clichés and shit like that, but obviously tomorrow’s Valentine’s Day, and more than that, it’s the first one we’re actually able to celebrate. Last year, what with being in Hawkins and the fact that we hadn’t even told the Party we were dating, we didn’t really celebrate it.”

“Not true – I received a mysteriously anonymous note in my locker.” Will smiled at the memory.

“As did I, but that’s not the point.”

“No, I know.” Mike squeezed his hand. “You want to do it properly.”

“Well, sort of. Is that okay?” Will looked anxiously up at Mike, who gave him a reassuring smile.

“Yeah, I guess so. I mean, my friends know we’re together – not least because they know you’re coming and I haven’t set up the sofa or a campbed.” Will felt his cheeks flush in spite of himself. “But seriously, yeah, that’s cool.”

“Really?” Will’s eyes widened.

“Yup, really. I mean – what’s the catch? I get chocolate and flowers and get to hang out with my boyfriend for the whole day with no judgemental relatives to worry about. Sounds great.”

“Cool,” Will said in a small voice before he started to laugh softly.

Mike frowned.

“What? Was... was that a joke?”

“No, I’m sorry,” Will answered, his face still shining. “It’s just, I never thought I could feel this happy.” He leaned up to kiss Mike on the cheek. “Come on, I’m hungry. Where are we eating?” Mike had completely forgotten.

“There’s a Burger King a block from here?”

“Nice. Let’s do it.”

The next morning, Mike woke first, stirring slowly to the dull light cast by the wintry morning through the crack in the curtains. His first thought was that he was exceptionally warm considering it was February and he had slept in a t-shirt and boxers. His subsequent realisation was that the explanation for this had to be the fact that Will was pressed up against him, one hand slipped under the pillow and his face buried in Mike’s chest. Mike’s instinctive response to this was to leap out of the bed, before he remembered that he was roughly two hundred miles from anyone who could find out. He let out a sigh of relief and wrapped his free arm around Will protectively. He didn’t care anyway, he told himself, almost convincingly. What was the noise outside? Oh, of course, Elliot was probably getting ready to leave, as it was... eight-thirty, Mike noted as he glanced at the clock. After all, it was Wednesday and he technically still had lectures, as did Will. But they had agreed that they would conveniently be out with the ‘flu for a few days simultaneously this week. Bummer. He hummed contentedly under his breath as he heard the front door close, kissing Will gently on the cheek and sliding out of bed. Silently, he pulled on a pair of socks and his robe, before tiptoeing out of the bedroom, glancing back at Will, who was still asleep.

In the kitchen, Mike set to work. He poured water into a saucepan and lit the gas stove, before setting the kettle to boil and retrieving the loaf of bread he’d bought the previous afternoon and a sharp knife. He spent a couple of minutes looking for a chopping board,

before finding it in the first place he'd looked. He cut two generous – if slightly lopsided – slices and put them in the toaster. Okay, the kettle was boiling. Hm. He probably should have waited to do that. Never mind, he'd re-boil it in a few minutes. He fetched two mugs and spooned instant coffee into them, one for him and one and a half for Will. Shit, the toast was burning. He ground his teeth in frustration and tossed them in the trash, before cutting two fresh slices and turning down the dial on the toaster. Ah, okay, now the water in the saucepan was boiling. Oh, for God's sake, he couldn't make boiled eggs as he didn't have any egg cups to put them in. Why was the simple act of making breakfast so difficult? He was a heartbeat away from pouring the water down the sink when he had a flash of inspiration and replaced the saucepan and carefully dropped two eggs in, before fetching two large shot glasses from the cupboard. *Genius*, he thought proudly. Shit, the toast! He turned sharply towards the toaster and jammed his finger on the eject button. Very slightly overdone, but it'd do. He scraped butter onto both slices, then remembered to switch the kettle back on. He paused for a moment to think about whether Will liked marmalade. He thought so. And if not, well, he'd eat it himself. Once he'd finished the toast, Mike placed the eggs in their respective shot glasses and hoped they were done right, poured hot water into the mugs and stirred the coffee.

This done, he placed everything on a tray and carried it carefully to the bedroom. He pushed the door open gently to see Will still asleep, before resting the tray on his dresser and kneeling on the bed. "Will?"

"No," was the muttered response. Mike kissed him on the forehead.

"Come on, Will. Time to wake up." Will opened his eyes and scowled. *Still cute*, Mike thought fondly. Will sighed and lifted himself into a sitting position, taking his glasses from the nightstand and shoving them on his face, which softened considerably when he saw the tray.

"You made breakfast?" His voice was deep and rough from sleep. Mike nodded.

"Here." He placed the tray on Will's lap and took his own coffee from it, climbing back into the bed and placing an arm around his boyfriend.

"That's so sweet," Will said dumbly as he took in the eggs in the shot glasses.

"You needn't sound quite so surprised." There was mischief in Mike's voice which went totally unnoticed.

"Bite me, Wheeler, I just woke up." He took a bite of the toast and Mike made a mental note that clearly Will did like marmalade.

An hour and a half later, the two were wandering through the park. The Christmas snow had thawed a month previously, but a hard frost had fallen overnight, and the grass was hard and cracked underfoot. With that in mind, Will had bundled up in warm extra clothes, while Mike was just wearing his coat and scarf.

"You make me feel cold," Will complained to Mike, anxiously rubbing the hand he was holding.

"I'm fine," insisted Mike. "But I'll buy a pair of gloves if it would make you happy." Will gave a non-committal hum as he eyed the red tinge on Mike's ears, or rather, the little of them that Will could see under his hair.

"And a hat?" he asked tentatively.

"Will..."

"I'm sorry," Will said quickly. "It's just that I worry about you."

"No, I know you do, it's okay."

"And I know I feel the cold more than, well, most people," he added. "Since..." He trailed off and shook his head. "But it doesn't matter. Today's about us, and I don't want to quarrel about something this silly." He looked up at Mike, who smiled back at him.

"Me neither."

"Thank you for making breakfast this morning. I know I was tired and grumpy, but I did appreciate it."

“It’s okay, it was no trouble.”

“Really?”

“Yes, of co... wait, why do you ask?”

“Oh, no reason, I just noticed the burnt toast in the trash.”

“Son of a bitch,” Mike muttered, and Will laughed.

“I’m teasing you. It was very sweet.”

“Yeah, whatever,” Mike smirked, glancing at a small café across the street as they wandered through the park gates. “Want to get coffee?” Will shot him a look.

“What do you think?”

They wandered in to find it was almost empty, and headed to the counter. The elderly woman behind the counter smiled at them.

“Good afternoon,” she said, smiling cheerfully and putting down the magazine she’d been perusing.

“Hi,” said Mike. Will thought he sounded nervous. “We’d like the coffee and cake special?” She frowned very slightly.

“I’m sorry, dears, that’s a Valentine’s special, for couples only.”

“Did I stutter?” Mike’s voice was stone cold but perfectly polite and restrained. She blinked twice, and sized them up.

“Oh, I see.” She paused, obviously dithering. “Er – well, if you’d like to take a seat, I’ll bring them over.” She glanced at them one final time before hurrying away. As they took their seats, Mike noticed Will staring at him in total admiration. He blushed slightly.

“What?”

“That was... wow.” Will’s eyes were wrinkled at the edges, which Mike recognised as a sign that Will was completely and genuinely

happy.

"I'm not pretending we're not together just to spend an extra two dollars on coffee," he shrugged. "No big deal."

"No big deal," echoed Will. "Except imagine me telling you a year ago – hell, even six months ago – that you would do that."

"I suppose," Mike said thoughtfully. At that moment, the woman who'd taken their order walked over holding a tray with two cups and two surprisingly generous slices of cake. Will thanked her and they tucked into their cake as she walked away, pulling a face as he sipped his coffee. "Something wrong?"

"This is a weakling's coffee," he grumbled. "I meant to ask for it black."

Mike chuckled into his own cup. "It's not bad. And the cake is nice."

"That's true," Will nodded as he ate a bit more. He had another drink of coffee, grimaced and pushed it towards Mike. "I can't drink this," he coughed. "I'll find a Starbucks and grab a coffee to go after this." He ate another forkful of cake to take away the taste of the coffee and smiled at his boyfriend. It still thrilled him that Mike was his boyfriend, and that they didn't have to sneak around, or steal kisses in empty rooms and jump apart at the slightest noise, or not sit too close, or worry about anything. They could just be themselves, individually and together. It was liberating.

"What are you thinking about?" Mike asked gently, interested but not wanting to intrude.

"Us," he said, still gazing into space. Mike smiled and held his hand across the table as Will finished his cake. "Ready?"

"Yup." Mike drained the second cup of coffee and winced. "Yikes, that'll hit in a half hour or so." He glanced at the check and left the total on the table before turning away.

"Uh, Mike?"

"Hm?" Mike glanced back.

“You didn’t leave a tip.”

“Oh, my bad.” He pulled a dime and a quarter out of his wallet and tossed them on the table. He raised an eyebrow at Will. “What? She was rude.”

“She didn’t mean to be rude.”

Mike frowned. “Fine.” He added a dollar to the total, and Will slipped one more on when Mike’s back was turned.

“We might be the first gay couple she’s ever met,” Will said quietly as they left. “Do we want to leave a bad impression?”

“We shouldn’t have to,” said Mike crossly. “I’m not mad at you,” he added. “It bothers me less than it used to, but I’m still sick of living in a world where we’re expected to be straight. It’s tiring.”

“I know,” said Will earnestly, “but it’s getting better. Do you want to know what I was thinking about earlier?” Mike nodded. “I was thinking how awesome it is that we can be openly together away from Hawkins. I was thinking how freeing it is not to worry about people seeing us kiss, or hold hands. And how proud of you I am and how far we’ve come together.” Mike’s frown cleared. “I love you,” said Will firmly. “And God knows it was worth skipping three days of college to come see you.”

“I love you too,” Mike smiled. “Thanks, Will – for everything. Happy Valentine's Day.”

Author's Note:

Thanks for reading! I know there's been a bit of a gap but a combination of writer's block and having started another story has slowed me down a bit.

If you enjoyed it, please leave a comment or message me on Tumblr (@teaforoneplease)!